Alzheimer's Disease Death Rates, Age-Adjusted
Clark County and Washington State, 1994 through 2001

Why we should care: Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia among older people. Symptoms can range from mild forgetfulness to more serious problems such as the inability to speak, understand, read or write. Although this disease affects up to 4 million Americans, mostly over the age of 60 years, it is not a normal part of the aging process. The death rate among persons with Alzheimer's is two times that of persons of the same age without the disease.

Status:

Clark County's death rate due to Alzheimer's disease has increased steadily between 1994 and 2001.

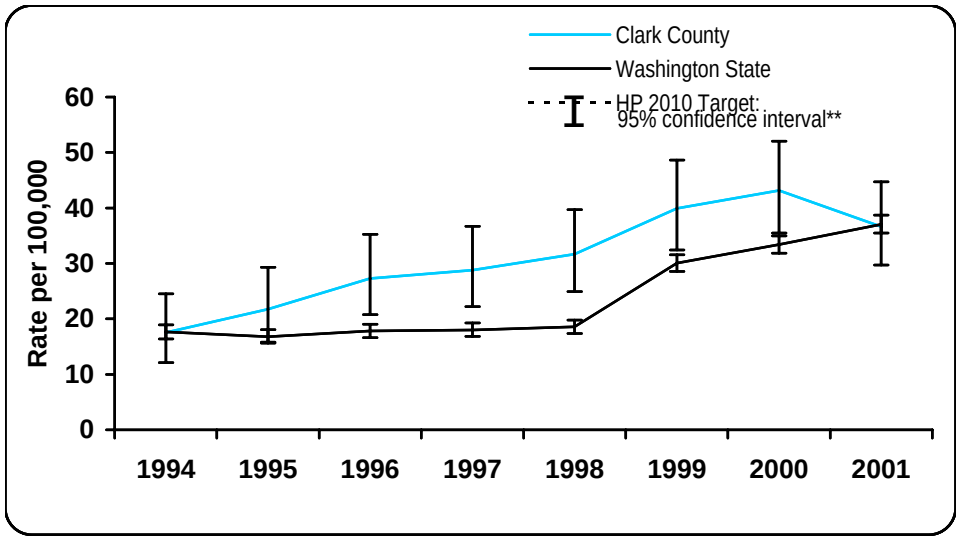
From 1995 to 2000 the Alzheimer's death rates for Clark County were statistically significantly higher than those of Washington State.

As the population in Clark County continues to age Alzheimer's disease deaths are likely to be a growing concern.

What we can do:

Currently, there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease although medication is available to prevent symptoms from worsening and to control problems like depression, anxiety, agitation and sleeplessness. Research is underway to find drugs to prevent or slow the progression of the disease.

Patients with Alzheimer's disease, particularly those who are bed-ridden, most commonly die of pneumonia.



	Clark County			Washington State		
Year	Rate*	95% CI**	Number	Rate*	95% CI**	Number
1994	17.5	(12.1, 24.5)	34	17.6	(16.4, 18.9)	783
1995	21.8	(15.8, 29.3)	44	16.8	(15.6, 18.0)	769
1996	27.3	(20.8, 35.3)	59	17.8	(16.6, 19.1)	848
1997	28.8	(22.2, 36.7)	65	18.0	(16.9, 19.3)	887
1998	31.7	(25.0, 39.7)	76	18.6	(17.4, 19.8)	945
1999	39.9	(32.5, 48.6)	99	30.0	(28.6, 31.6)	1,577
2000	43.2	(35.5, 52.1)	110	33.4	(31.9, 35.0)	1,801
2001	36.7	(29.7, 44.7)	97	37.1	(35.5, 38.7)	2,051

Please see reverse side for technical notes and sources.

Technical notes:

Rates:

-Much of public health assessment involves describing the health status of a defined community by looking at changes in the community over time or by comparing health events in that community to events occurring in other communities or the state as a whole. In making these comparisons, we need to account for the fact that the number of health events depends in part on the number of people in the community. To account for growth in a community or to compare communities of different sizes, we usually develop rates to provide the number of events per population unit. The following rates are most commonly used:

- Crude mortality rates, or death rates, are calculated by dividing the number of deaths due to a certain cause by the population in which the deaths are occurring in a specified period of time such as one year.

-Age-adjusted death rates are calculated to allow comparisons of death rates between two populations at the same time or the same population at different times. The age-adjustment process removes differences in the age composition of two or more populations to allow comparisons between these populations independent of their age structure.

- Incidence is a way of measuring the risk of a disease in a population. An incidence rate is calculated by dividing the number of new cases of a disease by the population in which the disease is occurring in a defined period of time (e.g. one year) and multiplying this number by 100,000.

Other technical notes:

- * Rate per 100,000 deaths adjusted using the 2000 U.S. Standard Population; deaths coded using ICD 10.
- ** 95% confidence intervals around the death rate; if the confidence intervals for state and county overlap in a given year, there is no significant difference between the rates.